

YOUTH NEWSLETTER

LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION/DCC YOUTH DESK

No. 25 December 1988



Youth choir serving the congregation in Hanusovce, CSSR, during LWF youth group visit

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Let's prepare for the LWF Assembly 1990

Report from: USA, Sweden, Estonia,
Silesian Church in the CSSR

Report on: European Lutheran Youth Conference
in Bratislava, CSSR

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E D I T O R I A L

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"...And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin'..."

(Luke 15,9)

Dear family member in Christ,

"The search for a missing dimension" could be a slogan for the struggle of our Christian life. Missing something does not always mean that we have already possessed what we are looking for. It does not even mean that we already know the aim of our search. We simply know that our happiness is not yet complete. We know that something important is missing. Therefore we cannot find peace and we dislike the results of our lives.

When opening the Bible we discover that it is full of examples of efforts to fulfill, to complete, to add the missing dimension in order to achieve peace. This peace can stand all the tests only if it is not an illusion based on fictive presuppositions. It can be a real peace only if it is built up (peace work for me = permanent construction work, giving the peace more stability than just a handshake of former enemies) before the loving and just God who has placed us in this world in order to fulfill our specific role.

What is this missing dimension? It was, for example, described in Luke 15 in the three different parables of the missing sheep, the missing coin or the lost son. What is it for me personally, for the family I belong to, for the spiritual family to which I was called, for my society, for my world? What is missing in youth work on the local level or in my national church? What is missing in our international youth cooperation for the completion of our task?

While reading the above three parables of Jesus in Luke, we understand that the main idea was that joy can be experienced if a person has been found by somebody (as the coin and sheep were found) or if a person has found his/her own way (as the son in the parable) to become a part of God's people. In such cases personal renewal can be observed, departing from what is wrong in one's life and discovering the missing dimension of a new identity and a new task. The new affiliation of a child of God brings about the discovery of a new vision for life, a new sensitivity for issues of justice and new creativity in identifying the proper measures. If the miracle of discovering the missing dimension occurs, the result is joy among the angels in heaven and in the hearts of those who are part of this change.

How does all this happen in youth work? Some concrete examples can be found in this issue of the Youth Newsletter which reports about national and regional meetings of which we should all be witnesses. We hope you will discover many challenges as you read our magazine.

We also hope that after reading this issue, you will find the courage to share, through our Youth Newsletter, your hopes and the challenges which you have discovered and followed in your own life or youth work. Your contribution, if you send it to us, will be an enrichment for the communion which we build together through the LWF.

Yours in Christ,

Julius

NOTES FROM OUR DESK:

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What has happened since the last issue in June?

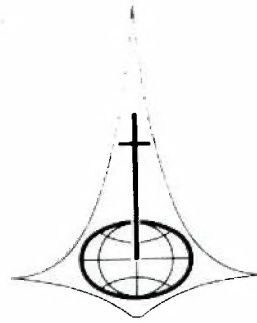
1. The Ad hoc Youth Committee, whose task is to advise the Youth Desk especially on the preparation of the Pre-Assembly Youth Conference planned for January 1990 in Argentina, met in Geneva on August 31 - September 4, 1988. A short report is included in this issue.
2. 7 applications received for two internships announced in our last issue were evaluated in September by the Interdepartmental Committee on Youth. According to the general guidelines and specific expectations concerning the two internships the following was decided:
 - a) For the internship with the Assembly Office, the main task of which will be an editorial assistance (especially in German) with the Assembly preparatory documents (for the LWF Assembly 1990), Ms. **Carolyn Decke**, FRG, was chosen.
 - b) For the internship with the Youth Desk, the task of which will be to assist in the preparation of the Pre-Assembly Youth Conference, Mr. **Matti Peiponen**, Finland, was chosen.

We ask for your prayers for the successful contribution and learning experience of our interns who will be with us approximately from February 1989 through February 1990.

3. The European Lutheran Youth Conference, with 60 participants, took place in Bratislava, Czechoslovakia on September 30 - October 11, 1988. The main theme was: "The ways leading to peace". We recommend the report in this issue.

For the future we prepare:

1. As some of you noticed, we have embarked on the preparation of the new LWF Assembly and thus also on the Pre-Assembly Youth Conference (PAYC). We have sent two letters to all youth liaisons in the LWF member churches concerning the preparation and we are still waiting for the reactions to the second one containing ideas suggested by the Ad hoc Youth Committee.
2. The second meeting of the Ad hoc Youth Committee concerning the preparation of the PAYC will be held in Geneva on February 1-5, 1989. (The third probably in October 1989).
3. A Workshop on Youth and Worship in Asia will be held in Madras, India, on March 4-10, 1989. About 25-30 Asian participants will attend.
4. A similar seminar on Youth and Worship is planned also for Europe. The dates and venue, however, are not determined yet. Both (point 3 and 4) are based on 1984 Assembly recommendations.
5. As part of the Latin American regional pre-assembly on May 15-20, 1989 in Columbia a program for about 10-15 Latin American and Caribbean youth will be included.
6. An international youth visitation team to Baltic Lutheran churches in the USSR will be organized in the second part of 1989 if time (and energy) allows during this crucial year of preparations for the Assembly and Pre-Assembly Youth Conference.



LET'S PREPARE TOGETHER FOR THE VIII. LWF ASSEMBLY IN 1990

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by the Editor

I am sure that it is not necessary to explain that the Assembly is very important in the life of our confessional family. The reason is simply that it evaluates a larger, past period and sets guidelines for the future of which we want to be part. In the case of the VIII. Assembly 1990 we also know that important changes in the structure of our federation are under way so that it will in a better way be able to serve its mandate. How can the youth of our member churches, through their representatives, participate in this process?

The LWF Executive Committee in Addis Ababa, (July 1988), upon the recommendation of the Standing Committee on Assembly Preparation, agreed on the following:

1. Out of the total of 392 delegates of the member churches to the VIII. LWF Assembly, there should be 66 youth which represents 16.73% of the total number of Assembly delegates (this 16.73% is more than the 15% in Budapest 1984 but less than requested by the LWF Assembly resolution 7.1.5. from Budapest in which it was agreed that 20% of the future assembly delegates should be youth). The youth delegates to the Assembly will come from the following regions:

- 12 from Africa (18.75% of the delegates from Africa)
- 9 from Asia (10%)
- 2 from Australasia (25%)
- 32 from Europe (19%)
- 1 from Latin America (4%)
- 5 from North America (8%)

It is necessary to know that this youth quota will be reached only if the member churches include youth in their delegations.

2. There will be 60 stewards at the Assembly who will come from the following regions:

- 20 from Brazil
- 10 from other Latin American churches
- 7 from Western Europe
- 4 from Eastern Europe
- 6 from Asia
- 6 from Africa
- 7 from North America

A more detailed specification on the quota system concerning different member churches is being worked out by the Assembly Office, taking into consideration e.g. the fact that the churches who could not send stewards to Budapest have a chance now to send them to Brazil. Invitations to nominate a certain number of stewards will be sent to the chosen member churches (their leadership) according to the agreed upon quota system.

3. It was also agreed by the Executive Committee in July that a Youth Pre-Assembly be organized. Although the organizatory responsibility for the Pre-Assembly Youth Conference (PAYC) is placed in the

Department of Church Cooperation (more precisely with the Youth Desk), it will be prepared in cooperation with all LWF departments and youth representatives of our member churches. The two bodies facilitating the preparation of the PAYC are: the Interdepartmental Committee on Youth and the Ad hoc Youth Committee (established by the CCC 1988). The results of the different stages of preparation are being communicated to the youth liaisons of the member churches (in those churches where the leadership gave us such names - a list was published in Youth Newsletter No. 22) for their reactions.

The Ad hoc Youth Committee established by the Commission on Church Cooperation at its meeting in Kyoto, Japan, April 1988 and composed of the following members: Heidi Gegenbach, Canada (did not attend); Maria Leijman, Sweden; Claudia Voigt, Brazil; Michael Frenzel, GDR; Jesse Lutabingwa, Tanzania; Shalem Raju, India; met for the first time in Geneva on August 31 - September 4, 1988.



We would like to communicate to you part of the results of this meeting concerning the objectives and the thematical structure of the Pre-Assembly Youth Conference which will take place near Buenos Aires in Argentina in January 1990 (venue was chosen by the presidents of the Latin American Lutheran churches). The term conference was chosen instead of gathering to stress an intention to concentrate on the study of common responsibilities based on the sharing of values existing in our member churches among the youth and an effort to express a common opinion on issues according to procedures respecting participation of every member of the communion gathered.

As objectives of the PAYC the Ad hoc Youth Committee identified:

The following key words express the objectives of the PAYC 1990:

1. FELLOWSHIP
2. REFLECTION
3. PREPARATION
4. EVALUATION
5. RECOMMENDATION

The above objectives were described in more detail by the Committee.

To the thematical structure the following has been agreed on:

Main theme of the PAYC 1990:

"DO NOT SAY I AM TOO YOUNG" - I will send you to
(according to: Jer. 1,7)

SUBTHEME 1: "Gather in community in the Holy Spirit" (to General Assembly sections "Life in Communion" and "Salvation")

- a) Bring the Gospel to the youth
- b) Utilize the ecumenical sensitivity of the youth
- c) Raise the social awareness of the youth

SUBTHEME 2: "Act for Justice and Work for Peace" (to General Assembly section "Peace with Justice")

- d) Work against all kinds of militarism (nuclear holocaust)
- e) Work for socio-economic justice (distribution of resources, theological reflection, unemployment)
- f) We are looking for a role in life, work and fulfillment
(personal dimension of socio-economic injustice)

SUBTHEME 3: "Live responsibly in God's creation" (to General Assembly section "A liberated Creation")

- g) Protection of the environment (energy, water, consumerism)
- h) Protection of the human life (lifestyle, genetics, abortion, euthanasia, AIDS)
- i) Respect of the Holy gift of life (theological perspective)

(a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h,i, are possible working group assignments.)

On the participants of the PAYC it was stated that there will be 66 youth delegates to the Assembly, 60 stewards and about 50 youth participants invited to the PAYC from member churches.

The Ad hoc Youth Committee made many proposals to the style of the conference, ways of reaching the objectives with the understanding that the future meetings of the Committee, while completing its task, will take into consideration the reactions received from the youth of the member churches and people interested. The list of questions related to the role of the youth in the process leading to the LWF Assembly 1990 has been passed on to the Standing Committee on Assembly Preparations for their reaction.

What is my role in my church concerning this preparation?

I am sure that your sensitive reading of the above information opens your eyes for your own role. It can be visible in many areas:

- in thematical preparation which will take place in the member churches with the understanding that the PAYC is thematically related to the Assembly - bringing about a deeper awareness of the role of the youth concerning the issues discussed;
- in cooperation with the Ad hoc Youth Committee in preparing for the PAYC - your reactions to the planning would be appreciated;
- in an offer to be helpful to the leadership of your church in the securing of youth representation at the Assembly and PAYC;
- in prayers for the success of the Assembly process expressed in a better function of our confessional family for the most urgent challenges in our countries, regions and globally.

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CONSULTATION OF "ECUMENICALS" AND "EVANGELICALS"
on the Future of Christian Youth Work

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by the Editor

Representatives of two groups of organizations met near Helsinki in Finland on June 20-23, 1988 upon an invitation of the Ecumenical Youth Council in Finland.

The reason behind this initiative was the fact that there are basically two groups of international Christian organizations/networks which are, through an international dimension, trying to contribute to Christian youth work and that these two groups know about each other only through press releases. Moreover, they had developed an artificial understanding of each other's work.

There is no generally accepted classification of one or the other group. One, described as "ecumenicals", is known through public statements produced in conference type meetings where they concern themselves not only with the question of the Christian faith but also with the questions challenged by the context of the life of the youth, not excluding complicated political issues and appealing to the necessity to proceed together with each and everybody, without regard to the ideological motivation, in order to solve today's burning issues.

The other group, often classified as "evangelicals", is known through mass meetings attended by thousands of young people, often coming from different denominations, focusing on the deepening of a personal commitment to Jesus Christ, providing new inputs for the growth of mission, leading youth to a personal relationship with our Savior and to a life confessing the new affiliation in Jesus. As this evangelistic work is understood to create a basis for any ethical action which is the living faith, horizontal questions follow thereafter and some of the difficult political issues are sometimes not considered. This again shows the emphasis that it is necessary to call people to Jesus in any political system since the ultimate aim of any mission is to receive eternal life from the hands of God.

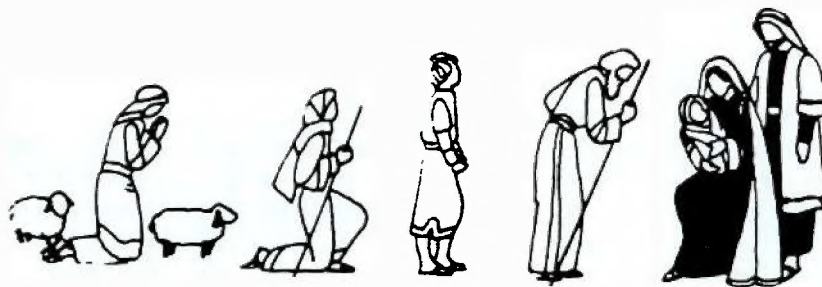
The participants in this informal consultation - the first of this kind - representing the WCC, WSCF-Europe, Syndesmos (international Orthodox youth organization), Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe (EYCE), Campus Crusade for Christ, the European Missionary Association (TEMA) and the LWF youth program together with the convening group from Finland, tried, first of all, to learn about the objectives and specific forms of the organizations present in order to gain an understanding of the similarities and differences. The representatives of Campus Crusade for Christ and the LWF were asked to give introductory remarks generalizing the common features of the work of the above two groups.

Giving a presentation on the present and future of the Christian youth work from the point of view of the so-called "ecumenical" youth organizations, I stressed that the Great Commission of Jesus Christ to make disciples of all nations... is a leading objective of any youth work which wants to be described as Christian. The particular aims of the youth work e.g. search for identity of the youth work, emancipation of youth, search for unity in youth work, are authentic if they are not a purpose in themselves but lead to service to other members of the churches and the needy in the world. Although it was, and still is, a

high priority of youth work to promote an action for peace and justice, a search for and deepening of spirituality as a part of the same effort is recognized more and more as important in the so-called ecumenical youth structures. For the future, I suggested that more unity between the youth work and the particular confessional congregations/communities, more use of Christian spirituality as motivation and a correlative of Christian action and learning from those implementing the same Great Commission of Jesus Christ across all existing divisions could bring about more positive fruits of the youth work.

Though no firm expectations had been set for this first gathering in Finland, the meeting brought the discovery of many similarities and the removal of some biases. These mainly European groups also hope to include other organizations and foster a global dimension in order to promote this dialogue. The meeting also initiated a discussion on the issues of church, congregation, mission, evangelization, eternal life and peace and justice. It was generally accepted that the organizations present will keep each other informed about their programs and ask for comments concerning the preparation of future activities in order to continue in the learning process and benefit from each other's different emphases. There was a clear understanding that the different strategies and forms of the various organizations present have many basic objectives in common and could be seen as complementary contributions to the implementation of the same Great Commission of our Lord Jesus.

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IN SPITE OF EVERYTHING



In August we had a big meeting within the Lutheran Church of Sweden Youth. We were 1660 participants who gathered in Lysekil, a city situated on the west coast. The lodgings were in schools where we slept on the floor of the classrooms and the gymnasiums. Besides the Swedish participants we also had invited some foreign guests. They came from Norway, Finland, Iceland, Poland and Southern Africa. Our guests from Africa were already in Sweden because they are scholarship students and will stay here for two years.

This year our theme was "In spite of everything". In Swedish the words "in spite of" mean two different things: either we do it because of the situation or we do it with obstinacy.. We worked with this theme in different districts, we were divided in six different groups, e.g. "servant?!", "follow me?!", "We are all one?!", "love each other?!".

I was a member of the planning group for "We are all one?!" which was part of the international district. In our group we referred to 1 Cor. 12 "We are one body in Christ". The whole world is one and if something is not working in the world then the body is wounded and can not go on. We spread this message to our participants, and through their work in small "base-groups" about these subjects, they got closer and closer to understanding that we are all one. In those "base-groups" they first worked with threats of different kinds and then how to get

rid of these threats. The third and last time they met they discussed about the creed and their task was also to propose a new creed with other words and formulations with which they were more familiar. All new creeds that were created were sent to our church and the committee which is working with those questions. Some of the "new" creeds were written on small notes, others were drawn on big papers. We all hope that the committee will take notice of our proposals.

This type of meetings take place every second year and they are a kind of manifestation, to show both each other and others that we exist and that we are many.

All worships that we celebrated together were great, the church was full every time. Especially the Nicaraguan service (Misa Campesina Nicaragüense) was one of the memories that will last for a long time.

Now that our big meeting is over and has become a memory of the past summer I hope that something in everyone of us who attended the meeting will show others that the youth organization is something to count with.

by Kajsa Ramström, Sweden

1988 E L C A NATIONAL YOUTH GATHERING

- THE UNFORGETTABLE

It is not easy to describe in a nutshell the feelings of a visitor from abroad to this huge youth gathering. One is first of all amazed at the size of everything. The Multicultural Youth Leadership Event (MYLE) took place prior to the Gathering itself on July 28-31 at Texas Lutheran College with about 580 young participants (which means senior high school age 16-18) and their leaders. They represented Lutherans from racially inclusive congregations and young black, Hispanic and native American members of the ELCA. The MYLE already indicated what would happen in the Gathering itself. Plurality of approaches to youth, reaching from worshipping together, impressive fellowship in the plenary, addresses to the theme: "Come on everybody rejoice", workshops offered... all of this was to me already at the MYLE as a festival which also tries to deepen the commitment of youth to the church and Jesus Christ.

My role at the MYLE was to address the plenary on "Rejoice in the Lord Always - using the gifts in God's world". This gave me a chance to show some of the aspects of mutual responsibility between the regions of humanity today. We experience a real joy if we do not use our gifts and talents only for ourselves, but share them in the global family - otherwise our happiness in our prosperity could be a reason for the perpetuation of suffering in other parts of the world - this is what I tried to explain to this sensitive group of young people.

The ELCA Youth Gathering, taking place in the San Antonio Convention Center on July 31 - August 4, exceeded my expectations. 21 000 participants, again youth of the senior high school age and their leaders dressed in shorts and T-shirts with the theme of the gathering: "Rejoice in the Lord Always", flooded the city like a beautiful, peaceful crowd giving a good example of what youth could be like. The program was conducted with a professional perfectionism with the many technical possibilities of the electronic age.

The speakers were well chosen e.g. Dean Farisani from South Africa or the "US teacher of the year 1987" Mr. Doud, who had in their hands the success of the morning "plenaries". In the afternoons, about 70 workshops on a variety of challenging topics, again conducted by those "who know" about the issues presented (about 1/3 of the participants attended each day a different 75 minutes workshop). Parallel to that a constituting meeting of the new youth organization which, with its about 400 delegates, finished its business including worship and elections in three sessions lasting altogether 6,5 hours.



Dean Farisani from South Africa spoke on "Rejoicing... as Lights in the World"

Also in the afternoons, the "Holy High School" was open. This could be described as a church related market of possibilities for youth comprising information on publishing houses, theological colleges, occasions for sports, singing, shows, scientific exhibitions...

One of the goals of "Holy High School" was to experience new ideas through role playing. Gathering participants had an opportunity of having their picture taken as the first female to be appointed bishop pending electoral approval... Women were finalists for the position of bishop in one dozen of the ELCA's 65 synods last year although none were elected.



There were also possibilities to visit San Antonio and experience many other things. Besides this, morning reflections in smaller groups and some evening program were offered daily in the hotels. All this was offered to the participants who were mostly sponsored by their families and contributed to the budget of the Gathering.

There were so many offers that one would have wished to prolong the Gathering by at least ten times in order to have a chance to attend everything and at least meet personally one tenth of the participants. One might have wished to have a sharing of all the wonderful gifts given by our Lord to this fantastic crowd of people and not only of those who could contribute in the workshops and in the plenaries from the stage. One might also have wished to see smaller or larger parts of this huge crowd finding a common view and progressing with one or another burning issue raised. Even if all this was not possible during the four days in San Antonio, the 1988 National Youth Gathering created a message able to penetrate the congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. An input for the youth work and the new church was given.

Without any doubts the days in San Antonio left a strong impression on everybody present. "Isn't it amazing that the church is able to organize something like this for the youth?" a friend asked me, an experienced youth leader whom I met. And it really was! A strong impression of a church with so many gifts. A mission event speaking to the youth through many channels and voices, pointing out so many important issues of a national and global nature.

by the Editor

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SCHLESISCHE KIRCHE IN DER CSSR ORGANISIERT EIN JUGENDTREFFEN

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vom Herausgeber

Eine der Minderheitskirchen in Europa, die Schlesische Evangelische Kirche Augsburgischen Bekenntnisses in der CSSR, hatte für den 24. September 1988 in Komorní Lhotka das erste ganzkirchliche Jugendtreffen organisiert. Die Begegnung war thematisch dem konziliaren Prozess für "Gerechtigkeit, Frieden und Bewahrung der Schöpfung" gewidmet. Das Thema wurde im Kontext der Jugendarbeit dieser Kirche folgenderweise modifiziert: "Frieden, Rechtfertigung und neue Schöpfung". Dadurch wurde ein starker Akzent auf Gottes Handeln bei Gläubigen gesetzt, das den Ansatzpunkt für das Engagement der Christen bildet. Die Annahme des Evangeliums unter der Jugend, die den verschiedensten Belastungen dieses Industriegebietes ausgesetzt ist, bringt neue Werte und Orientierung, die von Gott geschenkt worden sind in das Leben der Jugend und führt zu neuem Engagement gegenüber den Bedürftigen.

Im Rahmen des Programms gab es Beiträge einiger Musik- und Gesangsgruppen der Gemeinden, die auf den Reichtum der Jugendarbeit dieser 46.700 Mitglieder zählenden Kirche hindeutete; Beiträge zum Thema; Arbeitsgruppen zum Frieden, Gerechtigkeit und Bewahrung der Schöpfung und gottesdienstliche Versammlungen.



Beitrag zur Ökologie

Am Treffen haben 100 Jugenddelegierte der Gemeinden, etwa 150 weitere Jugendliche der Kirche am Vormittagsprogramm, Pastoren der Kirche, zusammen mit Bischof Dr. Vladislav Kiedron, Mitglied der Kommission für Kirchliche Zusammenarbeit des LWB, und einige ausländische Gäste teilgenommen. Der Koordinator des LWB Jugendprogrammes hat mit einer festlichen Predigt am Eröffnungsgottesdienst und mit einem Bericht über die gegenwärtigen Aufgaben des LWB beigetragen.

Das Treffen hat deutlich die aktive Rolle der Jugend in dieser Kirche aufgezeigt, wobei es zu guter Zusammenarbeit zwischen den Pastoren und den nichtordinierten Mitglieder kam. Die Sensitivität zu lokalen Friedensaufgaben (Lebenshilfe für die suchende Jugend, Ökologie des Industriegebietes), die dabei auch deutlich zum Ausdruck gekommen ist, wird bestimmt zu neuen Formen des Beitrages der jungen Christen dieser Kirche führen.

"WAYS LEADING TO PEACE" were discussed by the LWF European Lutheran Youth Conference in Bratislava, Czechoslovakia

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by the Editor

BACKGROUND:

The European Youth Conference was not only a formal continuation of the series of regional youth consultations organized by the LWF Youth Desk (in 1987-88 two more regional meetings were organized, one for Asia on the West Bank of Jordan and one for Africa in Zimbabwe). Two facts pointed strongly to the need for this meeting. At the 1984 Pre-Assembly Youth Gathering in Budapest, about 50% of the 250 participants were from Eastern Europe and many others from Western Europe. In spite of the large number of this group, it was noticed by some that the European participation was not active enough. Awareness of European affairs seemed to be rather low. Therefore they did not seem able to consider their own positions in relationship to the burning concerns of other continents. This was even expressed publicly. Probably for the same reason the result of the evaluation process of the 1984 PAYG, carried out for example by the Youth Advisory Committee established by the LWF German National Committee in the FRG, was to appeal to the LWF Executive Committee to give the Youth Desk a mandate to organize a European youth gathering.

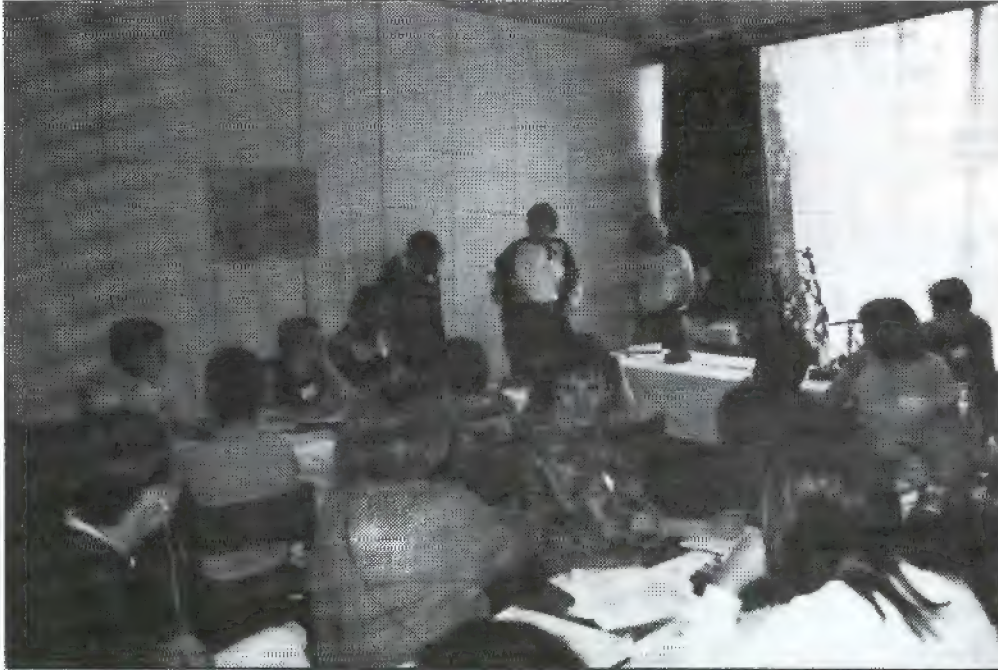
REALITY:

Such a meeting took place recently in Bratislava, Czechoslovakia from September 30 to October 11, 1988. There were 60 participants, of whom 48 came from member churches in Europe and had voting rights (no representatives were sent from Iceland and Rumania), representatives of LWF member churches from other continents (from Ethiopia, Tanzania, Argentina, India, USA), the World Student Christian Federation and the Christian Peace Conference-regional CSSR union, as well as 12 guests and staff members.



The conference part (6 days altogether) of the above 10 days were used in the following way:

- Reports on the youth work of the member churches in Europe were submitted and discussed. They presented an interesting picture of the variety of issues important for youth in different countries, a variety of methods used and similar concerns and hopes. The reports from other regions and organizations provided a dimension of openness for global issues.



- Work on the theme was facilitated by three main contributions on the following issues: "Peace work through evangelization" (presented by myself), "Actions of churches for social and political justice" by Mr. Rogate Mshana from Tanzania (presently on study leave in the FRG) and "Our task in the peace process in Europe" by Rev. Uwe Arnhold, FRG. Reflections on each of the above contributions were concretized by 2-3 case studies presented by participants.

- Three working groups explored the responsibility of youth in the above issues on the local, national and international levels. The results of the group work and the final documents adopted by the entire conference indicate the value of this meeting in concentrating on measures which could contribute to peace, using the true treasures of active Christian spirituality activating our Christian communities and their youth for peace work. But please, make up your own mind about this when reading the documents attached.

However, for the outcome of the conference, one should be aware of some other essential components which meant so much for all participants:

- First of all, the worship life of the group was decisive in creating a fruitful spiritual atmosphere. Worship did not take place only at the allocated times, but also penetrated our being together through songs at different times during the day and in discussions between two or more sharing each others' concerns.
- The host church opened its arms to the participants. This was appreciated and visible especially on the first Sunday when we visited congregations in and around Bratislava and during the three days of excursions to 12 congregations in Eastern Slovakia, Povazie and to the Silesian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in the CSSR.



These visits and encounters with the living faith in the congregations were an important constructive component of our fellowship. The signs of active youth work in most of the congregations visited (some of them with a youth choir and musical group)



gave many Western visitors the impression that there is much interest for community building in our sister churches in this country, which also has a relatively large number of achievements in social justice. The openness and hospitality to visitors and neighbors, signs of love and interest in the Christian community were more visible there than in those countries in the West which are oversaturated materially, some participants stated.

- To see the interest of the leadership of the Slovak Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in the CSSR in this meeting was also a sign of support to the representatives of the youth meeting in Bratislava. This was felt not only during the reception offered by the church with the participation of state authorities, but also on many occasions during the sessions and worship.



Group of theologians
from Slovakia
singing during
cultural evening



From right to left: Bishop Dr. Kostial, Dr. Macovsky, highest governmental officer in charge of church affairs in Slovakia, Bishop-General of the host church, Dr. Jan Michalko

The meeting adopted the following two documents which we share with you in the two languages used during the conference: English and German.

(We are preparing a more comprehensive report on this meeting, containing the main addresses, working group reports and other material which could be used as resource material in youth work. Please indicate to us in Geneva if you are interested in receiving it.)



C O M M U N I Q U E

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We, the 48 participants of the European Lutheran Youth Conference having come here upon the invitation of the Slovak Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in the CSSR, meeting from the 30th of September to the 11th of October, 1988, delegates representing 16 European countries together with guests from other continents and the WSCF, meeting under the theme "Ways leading to peace" in Bratislava, unanimously resolve to share the following statement. We understand this as our contribution to the conciliar process for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation:

MIGRATION

We are concerned with the rapid emigration of thousands of people to other countries, due to:

- A. Suffering because of the political, social and economical situation in their respective countries;
- B. Search for better living conditions;
- C. Discrimination and persecution of ethnic groups, such as e.g. Hungarians, Germans, Serbians, Ukrainians and other national minorities in Rumania;
- C. Personal reasons.

We, as young members of the churches in the countries of origin of emigrants and refugees should do everything in our power to recognize the causes of emigration and should take an active part in the betterment of conditions giving raise to emigration. We as young members of the churches in the countries of immigration are concerned with young people also becoming victims of hatred of foreigners, loneliness and neglect as migrants.

The churches and especially the youth groups should receive these immigrants into the family of the church. And also help to maintain the contacts to the country and the church they left. We as youth of the churches should promote and support the sustaining and cultivating of their own religious and cultural values. We see in this process an opportunity of mutual enrichment.

ARMS

Arms for peace is like alcohol against alcoholism.

We denounce and condemn the spirit, logic and praxis of deterrence. We urge all European churches to promote the the possibility of civil service as an alternative to military service. And provide opportunities for civil service within the framework of the churches. Every Christian who is confronted with the problem of military service should examine whether his decision is compatible with the Gospel. He who ventures upon armed military service must consider whether and in what ways this serves the reduction and prevention of violence and the establishment of a peaceful and just international order. We regard the refusal by Christians to do armed service or any form of military service as an expression of their obedience of faith leading towards peace.

The disarmament process is to be continued, which should result in the reduction of troops and armaments in Europe.

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

One step on the way to peace is personal contact. International partnership should move from economical and cultural dependency towards a relationship between equal partners.

We, as youth, want to establish contacts between one another, even without relying on the church leadership. Hence we should use the opportunities that LWF and ecumenical organizations provide.

The mutual learning of languages will provide the possibility to get acquainted with different cultures. Therefore, we as youth, recommend to our youth to take language learning seriously.

PEACE

The roots of peace is justice. We identified the following issues as concrete signs of injustice:

1. Division made by humankind of the one world created by God;
2. The free market system which perpetuates world poverty;
3. Unprecedented violation of social and political justice;
4. Support of dictatorship and increase in foreign debt.

Hence, we recommend that

- A. The churches urge the structures of division (e.g. into classes, races, sexes, etc.) at a national level;
- B. The churches continue cooperation with other groups that are also working towards Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation;
- C. The churches increase pressure on national governments which exploit other countries;
- C. The churches support the emergence of a fair trade system such as solidarity shops within fair trading relations to producers in the so-called Third World. The church should work against the transnational companies.

We, as youth of the churches, pledge to promote the above through e.g.:

1. Demonstrations of solidarity
2. Workshops
3. Peace vigils
4. Special worship services
5. Publications
6. Avoid to buy products from transnational companies
7. Give a personal example of simple lifestyles

It is our vies that both churches and we, their members, should investigate the way the churches own structures are integrated in terms of support in the system of injustice. We have to take steps which will make it possible to be freed from such structures.

We have realized the value of the economic cooperation between countries and joint economical ventures (which are different to TNC's exploiting

one of the countries in which they operate) for the peace making and we support them.

We have learned that some of our member churches are not able to provide for youth leadership training programs at the present time. Hence, we recommend to those churches that organize youth leadership programs to extend invitations to the churches without these possibilities. We see the lack of opportunities in some churches to form youth organizations where the youth are enabled to express their faith and concerns on issues of peace and other topics. We recommend the LWF to encourage and support youth through enabling a process in which Lutheran youth organizations can be formed on a national level.

Furthermore, we commit ourselves to strengthen the network of youth work by an exchange of contact addresses and also encourage mutual visitation wherever possible.

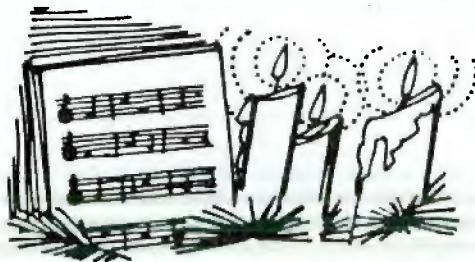
We are concerned about the lack of adequate fellowship and communication between the youth of East and West. Therefore, we recommend that the youth groups commit themselves to strengthen the East-West fellowship.

And, we recommend to the LWF Youth Desk that a European workcamp be organized in order that different national views can be exchanged. We further suggest that every three years the LWF convene a European youth gathering.

WE ARE GRATEFUL TO

- the Youth Desk staff
- the Slovak church leadership for their invitation, and the hospitality of the Slovak and Silesian Church
- the Slovak youth for arrangements
- the local churches for their warmth, friendliness and visitation programs
- the resource persons
- the interpreters

Bratislava, October 7, 1988



A P P E A L TO THE CONGREGATIONS
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Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lutheran congregations in Europe,

We, as youth representatives of our churches in Europe, met in Bratislava, CSSR from September 30 to October 11, 1988. Our theme was: "Ways leading to peace". In this meeting we learnt a lot about our countries and churches and their problems. We discovered that North and South, East and West have similar problems. In our midst there are many lonely people, youth are often left alone with their problems, they have no partner with whom to share them and who can help solve them. Children grow up in a world inundated by the media, but where they lack the important experience of love and security.

We would like to ask our churches' congregations to focus not only on the important problems of this world but also on their own.

However, how can we be peacemakers when we are not peace loving ourselves?

Therefore we would like to encourage both you and ourselves to focus more on the problems in our own congregations, as mastering them would strengthen us in solving worldwide problems.

Christ says: "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?".

This means that peace has to begin with us, ourselves! But, what could these first steps on the way to peace be like? In our discussions, among others, the following possibilities occurred to us:

- To use Christian work among children and youth in order to engage in conversation with them about their questions and problems and thus make possible a community experience.
- To create possibilities for supporting youth in solving their own conflicts as they are completely overwhelmed by the abundance of information on world problems.
- The importance of the family in a person's life must also be reflected in our churches' different activities.
- Spiritual life as a source of power for social engagement must be rediscovered.

May God's blessings give us strength to carry out these tasks!

Participants of the Youth Conference

On Sunday, October 2, 1988 the participants visited seven congregations in and around Bratislava and went on a sightseeing tour in the city of Bratislava in the afternoon.

The congregation in Jur Pri Bratislave greeted the guests with a musical program by the children



A stopover at the Bratislava castle with a beautiful view of the city and Martin's Cathedral where kings were crowned in the past

A new square in front of the old government building in Bratislava



K O M M U N I Q U E

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Wir, die 48 Teilnehmer/innen der Europäischen lutherischen Jugendkonferenz sind auf Einladung der Slowakischen Evangelischen Kirche A.B. in der CSSR hier vom 30. September bis zum 11. Oktober, 1988 in Bratislava zusammengekommen. Wir waren Delegierte aus 16 europäischen Ländern mit Gästen von anderen Kontinenten und dem WSCF, die unter dem Thema: "Wege die zum Frieden führen" einmütig die folgende Erklärung beschlossen haben, die wir als unseren Beitrag zum Konziliaren Prozess für Gerechtigkeit, Frieden und Bewahrung der Schöpfung sehen:

MIGRATION

Wir sind betroffen von der zunehmenden Auswanderung tausender Menschen in andere Länder, auf Grund von:

- A. Leiden unter den politischen, sozialen und ökonomischen Situationen ihrer Heimatländer;
- B. Suche nach besseren Lebensbedingungen;
- C. Diskriminierung und Verfolgung ethnischer Gruppen, wie z.B. Ungarn, Deutsche, Serben, Ukrainer und andere nationale Minderheiten in Rumänien;
- D. Persönlichen Problemen.

Wir als junge Glieder der Kirchen in den Heimatländern der Emigranten und Flüchtlinge sollten alles dafür tun, die Ursachen der Emigration zu erkennen und sollten uns aktiv für die Verbesserung der Zustände, die die Flucht verursachen, einsetzen.

Wir als junge Glieder der Kirche in den Einwanderungsländern sind betroffen, weil auch junge Menschen zu Opfern von Ausländerfeindlichkeit, Einsamkeit und Vernachlässigung als Immigranten werden. Die Kirchen und besonders die Jugendgruppen sollten diese Immigranten in die Familie der Kirche aufnehmen. Auch sollten sie dazu beitragen, dass die Kontakte zum Heimatland und zur Heimatkirche aufrecht erhalten werden. Wir als junge Glieder der Kirchen sollten es unterstützen und fördern, dass Migranten ihre eigenen religiösen und kulturellen Werte erhalten und pflegen. Wir sehen in diesem Prozess eine Möglichkeit gegenseitiger Bereicherung.

WAFFEN

Waffen für den Frieden sind wie Alkohol gegen Alkoholismus.

Wir verurteilen Geist, Logik und Praxis der Abschreckung. Wir fordern alle europäischen Kirchen auf, die Möglichkeit des Zivildienstes als eine Alternative zum Militärdienst zu fördern und Möglichkeiten für einen solchen Zivildienst innerhalb des Rahmens der Kirchen zu schaffen. Jeder Christ, der vor die Frage des Wehrdienstes gestellt ist, muss prüfen, ob seine Entscheidung mit dem Evangelium des Friedens zu vereinbaren ist. Wer heute als Christ das Wagnis eingeht, in einer Armee Dienst mit der Waffe zu tun, muss bedenken, ob und wie er damit der Verringerung und Verhinderung der Gewalt und dem Aufbau einer internationalen Ordnung des Friedens und der Gerechtigkeit dient. Wir sehen in der Entscheidung von

Christen, den Waffendienst oder den Wehrdienst überhaupt zu verweigern, einen Ausdruck des Glaubensgehorsams, der auf den Weg des Friedens führt.

Der Abrüstungsprozess muss fortgesetzt werden und sollte in der Reduzierung von Truppen und Waffen in Europa resultieren.

INTERNATIONALE PARTNERSCHAFTEN

Ein Schritt auf dem Weg zum Frieden besteht im persönlichen Kontakt. Internationale Partnerschaft sollte sich von ökonomischer und kultureller Abhängigkeit hin zu einer Beziehung gleicher Partner wandeln.

Wir als Jugendliche möchten Kontakte miteinander schliessen und uns dabei nicht nur auf Kirchenleitungen verlassen. In Folge dessen sollten wir die Möglichkeiten nutzen, die dem LWB und den ökumenische Organisationen zur Verfügung stehen.

Das gegenseitige Erlernen von Sprachen schafft Möglichkeiten, mit verschiedenen Kulturen vertraut zu werden. Darum empfehlen wir als Jugendliche unseren Jugendlichen das Erlernen von Sprachen ernst zu nehmen.

FRIEDEN

Die Wurzel des Friedens ist Gerechtigkeit. Wir wurden uns der folgenden Aspekte als konkreter Zeichen von Ungerechtigkeit bewusst:

1. Zertrennung der von Gott geschaffenen einen Welt durch den Menschen;
2. Das System des freien Marktes welches die Armut in der Welt fortsetzt;
3. Beispiellose Verletzung sozialer und politischer Gerechtigkeit;
4. Unterstützung von Diktaturen und wachsende Auslandsverschuldungen.

In Folge dessen fordern wir, dass:

- a. Die Kirchen die trennende Strukturen (z.B. Klassen, Rassen und Geschlechter) auf nationaler Ebene zu überwinden suchen;
- b. Die Kirchen die Zusammenarbeit mit anderen Gruppen die sich auch für Gerechtigkeit, Frieden und Bewahrung der Schöpfung einsetzen, fortführen;
- c. Die Kirchen den Druck auf ihre Regierungen, welche andere Länder ausbeuten, verstärken;
- d. Die Kirchen das Entstehen eines fairen Welthandelssystem unterstützen, z.B. Solidaritätsläden mit fairen Handelsbeziehungen zu Herstellern in der sogenannten Dritten Welt. Die Kirchen sollen den transnationalen Konzernen entgegenwirken.

Wir als Jugend der Kirchen verpflichten uns, die oben genannten Ziele zu fördern, z.B. durch:

1. Solidaritätsdemonstrationen
2. Workshops
3. Friedens-Nachtgebete
4. Besondere Gottesdienste
5. Veröffentlichungen

6. Vermeiden Produkte von übernationalen Gesellschaften zu kaufen
7. Vorleben von einfachen Lebensweisen

Die Kirchen, und besonders auch wir als ihre Mitglieder, müssen unserer Meinung nach überprüfen, wo die kirchlichen Strukturen sich in das System der Ungerechtigkeit einfügen und dieses unterstützen. Wir müssen Schritte gehen, die von solchen Strukturen wegführen.

Wir haben den Wert der ökonomischen Zusammenarbeit zwischen Ländern und gemeinsamen ökonomischen Unternehmen für die Friedensstiftung gesehen (diese unterscheiden sich vom TNC's die einer der Partnerländer, wo sie funktionieren, ausbeuten) deswegen unterstützen wir sie.

Wir haben erfahren, dass einige unsere Mitgliedskirchen gegenwärtig nicht fähig sind, Jugendleiter auszubilden. In Folge dessen empfehlen wir jenen Kirchen, die Jugendleiterausbildungen organisieren, Einladungen an die Kirchen auszusprechen, denen solche Möglichkeiten fehlen.

Wir sehen, dass es der Jugend in manchen Kirchen an Möglichkeiten mangelt, in Friedensfragen und anderen Themenkreisen ihren Glauben und ihre Anliegen zu Fragen zu bringen. Empfehlung: Wir fordern die Mitgliedskirchen des LWB auf, durch ermutigende und unterstützende Massnahmen die lutherische Jugend zu befähigen, eigene Jugendorganisationen auf nationalen Ebene zu errichten.

Darüber hinaus bekennen wir uns dazu, die Vernetzung der Jugendarbeit durch den Austausch von Kontaktadressen zu verstärken und zu gegenseitigen Besuchen zu ermutigen, wo immer dies möglich ist. Wir sind betroffen über die mangelnde Gemeinschaft und von Kommunikation zwischen der Jugend in Ost und West. Deshalb empfehlen wir den Jugendgruppen sich selbst dazu zu verpflichten, die Gemeinschaft zwischen Ost und West zu verstärken. Zu dem empfehlen wir dem Jugendbüro des LWB ein europäisches Workcamp zu organisieren, um den Erfahrungsaustausch zwischen den einzelnen Nationen zu ermöglichen. Weiter empfehlen wir, dass der LWB auf europäischer Ebene alle drei Jahre Jugendtreffen einberuft.

WIR DANKEN INSBESONDERE

- dem Stab des Jugendbüros des LWB
- der Slowakischen Kirchenleitung für die Einladung und die erwiesene Gastfreundschaft der Slowakischen und Schlesischen Kirchen
- der Slowakischen Jugend für die Vorbereitung
- den örtlichen Kirchengemeinden für ihre Warmherzigkeit, Freundlichkeit und die Besuchsmöglichkeiten
- den Referenten/innen
- den Uebersetzern/innen

Bratislava den 7. Oktober 1988

A U F R U F A N D I E G E M E I N D E N

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Liebe Brüder und Schwestern in den lutherischen Gemeinden in Europa,

Als Vertreter der Jugend unserer Kirchen aus ganz Europa haben wir uns vom 30. September bis 11. Oktober, 1988 in der CSSR getroffen. Unser Thema was: "Wege die zum Frieden führen". Auf diesem Treffen haben wir viel über unsere Länder und Kirchen und ihre Probleme erfahren. Wir haben festgestellt, dass sich wesentliche Probleme in Nord und Süd, Ost und West gleichen. In unsere Mitte sind viele Menschen einsam, die Jugendlichen stehen mit ihren Problemen oft allein, sie haben keinen Partner dem sie ihre Probleme erzählen können und der ihnen bei der Lösung hilft. Kinder wachsen in einer Welt auf in der sie von Medien überflutet werden, doch wichtige Erfahrungen wie Liebe und Geborgenheit fehlen ihnen.

Wir möchten die Gemeinden unserer Kirchen bitten sowohl die grossen Probleme dieser Welt als auch ihre eigenen Probleme ins Blickfeld zu nehmen.

Wie können wir aber Friedensstifter sein wenn wir selbst nicht friedfertig sind?

Deshalb möchten wir sie und uns ermutigen die Probleme in unseren eigenen Gemeinden stärker ins Blickfeld zu nehmen, da ihre Bewältigung uns stark macht für die Lösung der weltweiten Probleme.

Denn Christus spricht: "Was siehst du aber den Splitter in deines Bruders Auge und nimmst nicht wahr den Balken in deinem Auge?"

Dies heisst also, dass der Frieden bei uns selbst anfangen muss! Wie aber können die erste Schritte auf diesem Weg zum Frieden aussehen? Uns sind in der Diskussion u.a. folgende Möglichkeiten eingefallen:

- Die christliche Arbeit mit Kinder und Jugendlichen zu nutzen um mit ihnen über ihre Fragen und Schwierigkeiten ins Gespräch zu kommen und das erleben von Gemeinschaft möglich zu machen.
- Freiräume schaffen um Jugendliche bei der Lösung ihrer eigenen Konflikte zu unterstützen, da sie die Fülle an Informationen über Weltprobleme vollkommen überfordert.
- Die Wichtigkeit der Familie im Leben eines Menschen muss sich auch in unseren kirchlichen Arbeitsformen widerspiegeln.
- Geistliches Leben als Kraftquelle für gesellschaftliches Engagement muss wieder entdeckt werden.

Möge uns Gottes Segen Kraft für diese Aufgaben geben!

Teilnehmer der Jugendkonferenz

A selection of comments from participants on the **EUROPEAN LUTHERAN YOUTH CONFERENCE** (given on evaluation sheets):

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To the question: what does this meeting mean to me?:

- Now every country in Europe does not only have a name but also a face. It has been made very clear to me what it means to be the light of the world and that we are one in Christ. It will also mean a lot for my youth work because it speaks directly about our problems.
- An important step towards unity of a large Lutheran family which can set an example to life in other communities.
- An important possibility of encounter with youth from East and West. Such personal contacts are very important.
- The greatest experience in many years! At home I will try to continue working thematically, I have been encouraged again to do so.
- I will try to study, find out, learn more about Eastern Europe. I have gained useful contacts for our youth organization.
- Exchange of ideas and information. Beginning of new international contacts. Strengthening of my conviction that there are more things that unites me with other people than things that separate us.
- To me it was a unique event that touched me quite a bit. Just to mention two points: The deep spiritual fellowship, the intensive encounter with all these brilliant people from the Eastern countries, and the concentrated work in the plenaries made the conference a comprehensive success.

Suggestions for the next activity of this kind:

- The participants of this conference should be included in the planning of the next one. It would be good to decide that at least 50% of the delegates be non-theologians. Before beginning with group work, the process of finding themes should be carried out together with the participants.
- Continue like this, possibly in Eastern European countries so that also lay people can travel.
- Maybe try to meet under more modest conditions.
- I'm happy that the host church leaders were together with us for such a long time during our meeting, e.g. the General Secretary. Peace is a complex topic - and we just touched some parts of it. I'm afraid that each and one just come with their opinion - and tell them - and it will not be so much of a change of opinion. I think we need more time for this process.
- To promote further international contacts between youth e.g. through European youth camps, youth conferences on the theme of peace and culture.



TO CONFESS AND TO SERVE

(Yvonne Lennemyr-Frykman, Sweden, the author of this article, and Thomas Dasek, Austria, participated at the Youth meeting in Estonia (USSR) on behalf of the LWF.)

The above was the theme for the youth conference which was held in Tallinn, Estonia on October 27-29, 1988. The conference was organized by the Estonian Lutheran Church. It was the first youth conference which has been held within the Estonian Lutheran Church since 1940. 195 people from all over Estonia as well as some guests from abroad participated.

We listened to speeches on the theme and also to reports on the 1000 year anniversary of the old Orthodox Church. In the program there were also workshops with different themes: "Bible and School", "Church and Social Movements", "Traditions and Modernism in the Church", "Witness of God's word outside the church", "Confirmation as Witness and Commitment", "Christian Diaconia", "For whom is Diaconia useful".

The discussions were very interesting and it gave the participants an opportunity to see what young people in the Church of Estonia are involved in. There was also an election to the Youth Council; 35 members from different parts of Estonia were chosen to start working with youth work/youth questions in the church. Of these, nine were elected to the Executive Committee.

It is a very important step the church has taken, because young voices are needed today. Young people

are not only the future, but also resources for today.

As a guest, I was invited to speak in a church 120 km from Tallinn, Viru Nigula. It was a great experience for me to meet the parish there. God is working, but the tools He uses look different from country to country. The language obstacle vanished when I spoke to the elderly women in the church; we looked at each other and understood that God is part of our lives. The service was followed by the confirmation of two young persons, a boy and a girl; they were going to get married. I felt at home in this church; there were the same movements; we had the same feelings of joy and respect. God is working!

To be a guest in Estonia is to be well taken care of and I am grateful that I had the possibility to meet the brothers and sisters from the Church of Estonia and I realize that we are the same before God. Estonia is not so far from Sweden but in some respects it is far away. In Sweden the church has other possibilities for example regarding the economic situation, but we deal with the same challenges as the Estonian Lutheran Church: to reach out with the Gospel to women and men of today.

God bless the work in Estonia and all over the world!

Yvonne Lennemyr-Frykman

NEWS IN BRIEF

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CANADA (from a letter to the Youth Desk)

Streams in the Desert, is the name of a project of the National Youth Ministry Committee of the ELCIC whose goal is to raise \$ 50,000 in 1988 for development work in Mozambique. A mass offering was received at the Canadian Lutheran Youth Gathering (CLYG), **Stand by Me**, August 25-28, 1988 in Edmonton, Alberta. The project is a cooperative effort of the Division for Parish Life and Canadian Lutheran World Relief (CLWR). Funds will be channeled through the ELCIC's Global Hunger and Development Appeal and designated to CLWR to assist with the agency's commitment to a comprehensive rehabilitation and development program in Mozambique.

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY (epd)

"Many Jehovah's Witnesses refuse to believe that the mother organization in the USA is a commercial undertaking and that its partially fanatical faith is exploited for the benefit of the enterprise." With these words Rev. Stefan Weissflog, the representative for sectarian questions of the North Elbian Youth Work, especially cautioned young people against the worldwide organized sect. The reason for these words was a congress in Hamburg with the theme "Divine Rights" in which about 30.000 members were expected to participate. The worldwide membership of this religious community is about 3,4 million.

According to Weissflog's information, the Witnesses do missionary work and live in the "expectation of the end of time". They felt called to "caution against the final day of judgment". In a near future there will be a "final battle" on the earth. Exactly 144.000 "chosen people" will then establish a "heavenly government". Other Jehovah's Witnesses can continue to live on the earth in an "earthly paradise". Those who do not belong to the organization will be killed. With this fear, says Weissflog, members are "kept up to scratch".

The community was established in 1874 by the American Charles Taze Russel (1852-1916). Already during the last century, in the 1970s, there were so-called "Expectations of the final day". In 1979 they published their own newspaper. At the same time an enterprise by the name of "Zion's Watch Tower Tract Society" with a commercial character was established. Thanks to the zeal and modesty of its servants, the publications of the Jehovah's Witnesses yield "good profits".

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY (epd)

Berlin -- The Evangelical Youth of Berlin (West) supported the appeal to demonstrate on Sunday, September 25 on the occasion of the annual meeting of the International World Fund and the World Bank. The appeal, made by the "Alternative Berlin List" and several political groups as well as action groups, criticize the debt management of the IWF, the World Bank, business banks and western governments and supports the demand for the cancellation of debts and the establishment of a new, just, world economy.

GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC (epd)

Harald Bretschneider, youth pastor in Saxony, is alarmed at the GDR authorities' practice of fining youth because they express their reservations against the community by their outward appearance. Lately, disciplinary penalties have been imposed on many young persons indicating that their "shocking conduct" has offended "to a considerable extent the sense of decency and human dignity", Bretschneider reported on Tuesday, October 25 at the synodical meeting of the Church of Saxony in Dresden.

The provocations of young people, even going as far as the violence which has erupted repeatedly in the last months, question preceding generations as well as the social situation in general. It is not possible to meet this explosive situation either with truncheons or with high penalties. One should also be careful not to explain and criminalize the apparition of youth violence with influences from the West. In this connection Rev. Bretschneider can hear the reproach of youth that in church and society memorial days are commemorated but the problems of today are kept secret.

GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC (by editor)

About 110 young Christians from 21 European countries took part in the 20th General Assembly of the Ecumenical Youth Council in Hirschluch near Storkow, GDR. The theme of the gathering was: "Planted to live and to grow". The Ecumenical Youth Service in the GDR hosted the event for the third time in the 20 years of the ECYE's existence.

GREAT BRITAIN (from SATIS)

A seminar entitled "Children, Apartheid & Repression in Namibia" was convened by SATIS (Southern Africa - The Imprisoned Society) c/o Anti-Apartheid Movement, 13 Mandela Street, London NW1 0DW, on October 29, 1988. The seminar is a follow-up to the Conference "Children, Apartheid & Repression in Southern Africa" held in April of this year. At the April Conference the need for a specific focus on the situation facing children in Namibia, as a result of South Africa's illegal occupation, was clearly identified. The seminar was supposed to provide this focus and to be an opportunity to hear first-hand from those working directly with Namibia's children. It was planned that a unique feature of the seminar would be the participation of three young Namibians who have recently crossed the Namibian border to Angola and that the keynote addresses would be presented by Hidipo Hamutenya, SWAPO Information Secretary and Ben Uulenga, General Secretary of the Mineworkers Union of Namibia.

HUNGARY (from News service of German Bible Society, Sept. 1988)

Bible societies want to strengthen their care of young people. In the concluding statement of their general assembly in Budapest, the 272 delegates from 108 countries confirmed that by the year 2000 they want to publish and distribute special editions of the Bible presented in a way more suited to youth. This was reported by the Information Secretary of the United Bible Societies, David Bramley, in the Bible House in Stuttgart. Such a youth edition of the biblical message cannot be made without the youth themselves, the document says, they should take an active part in this project. The goal is to bring the message of Jesus Christ to the generation which is growing up now - after all, 23 million new persons are accepted worldwide by the Christian church year after

year. Since their beginning, the Bible societies see their task as providing all Christians and interested people with a Bible in an understandable language.

HUNGARY (kipa, 314)

In the spring of next year a large international Christian youth meeting will take place for the first time in Hungary with participants from East and West. The meeting, which is organized by the ecumenical community of Taizé (France), will take place in the city of Pecs in southern Hungary from April 28 to 30. The participants coming to Pecs will be lodged with congregations in the city. The young people, together with the Catholic bishop of Pecs, Jozsef Cserhati, Roger Schutz and other brothers of the Taizé community, will meet in the churches of Pecs for prayers, reflection, discussion and songs.

HUNGARY (kipa 316)

The Hungarian Government decided on Thursday, November 10 to introduce a "Civil Service" for conscientious objectors. This service can be carried out by conscripts who apply for it because they refuse military service or also military service without arms for religious reasons and those of conscience. The civil service will last 36 months - military service is 18 months - and, according to a governmental representative, will have the character of labor service. It was explained that they will mainly carry out manual work which is "in the interests of society". The employer will have to provide board and lodging. The national wage and labor board will be responsible for this civil service and not the military authorities.

It is expected that the civil service will come into force already in January of next year. The governmental representative gave to understand that efforts are being made to realize the civil service quickly.

THE PHILIPPINES (alps)

Baguio City -- The Philippine Lutheran youth have formed a national body at its nation-wide consultation held at the Lutheran Theological Seminary here recently. The 90 delegates or more included 15 delegates from each Lutheran Church in the Philippine's district as well as guests who attended. Districts represented were North Luzon Highland, South Luzon, North Luzon Lowland, Visayan and Mindanao.

One aim of the five-day long consultation was to create a national youth body to help support the ministry of the youth in each district and provide an opportunity to create a closer fellowship of the youth in their Christian endeavor to serve the Lord to the best of their ability in spite of problems and crises.

POLAND (idl)

Vienna / Kathpress 09/88 -- On the occasion of the National Day on July 22, the Polish Government released 95 condemned or accused conscientious objectors. The alternative service, which is two years for university graduates and three for others - which means one year longer than the military service - can be completed above all in hospitals or in

environmental services. The Polish Parliament recently embodied in law the right of objection for reasons of conscience. Conscripts who object to military service for religious or other reasons of conscience have to make an application accordingly and a Commission has to come to a decision on this.

SWEDEN (from a letter to the Youth Desk from the Swedish Red Cross)

"Since 1979, a working group of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights has been working on a text of a new convention on the Rights of the Child. The drafting process is now in its final stages. The aim is to finalize the draft by 1989, a very symbolic year indeed for children, as it will mark the 30th anniversary of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child and the 10th anniversary of the International Year of the Child.

The Red Cross - in particular its youth movement - is actively engaged in the efforts to establish the new convention. Our work among young people all over the world tells us how important it is to improve living conditions for children. The needs for improvement are most obvious in the poor countries. Millions of children lack the most basic needs like food, shelter and protection. But also children in the rich countries are confronted by many problems, the most salient one perhaps being the lack of understanding and communication between many young people and their parent's generation. Consequently, we welcome the initiative to establish the convention of the Rights of the Child".

SWITZERLAND (epd)

The most frequent cause of death among young men in Switzerland is suicide. According to published statistics in the latest issue of the "Swiss Medical Journal", 30% of all deaths of young men between 20 and 34 is due to suicide. 50% of these shoot themselves. During the last 16 years Switzerland has registered up to 1.600 suicides annually and is one of the countries with the highest suicide rate. Scientists see the reason for this in the difficulties of adaptation of young Swiss men.

SWITZERLAND (by editor)

The European Ecumenical Assembly on "Peace with Justice" will be held in Basel, Switzerland on May 15-21, 1989. The activity is jointly organized by the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the Council of European Bishop's Conferences (CCEE). Hopefully there will be many young people coming as delegates of the churches to this important European assembly and about 100 stewards will also be selected. The Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe (EYCE) has been sending out and receiving applications for the stewards' program - the deadline was November 30. The preparation of the youth participants for this meeting is jointly coordinated by several Christian youth organizations led by EYCE. For further information please contact the EYCE, 217 Holywood Road, Belfast, Northern Ireland, BT4 2DH.

TANZANIA (by editor)

The subregional cooperation of Lutheran youth in Africa, which was proposed by the African Lutheran Youth Leaders Conference in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe in May 1988, starts to show first signs of beginning in the East

African subregion. As reported in the previous issue of the Youth Newsletter, it was proposed that the Lutheran churches in Africa be divided into three regions for the purpose of subregional youth cooperation. The East African subregion (Tanzania, Kenya, Ethiopia, Malawi and Madagascar) will have a first planning meeting next year on January 17-20 upon the initiative of members of the subregion themselves.

UNITED NATIONS (from FLMI, 130)

All over world, 200.000 children under 15 years of age carry weapons and do military service in one form or another. This information from non-governmental organizations has formed the subject of a report by the United Nations, even if it is still incomplete. Children are kidnapped, picked up in the streets and taken away. Some who are pushed by their parents offer themselves for war service. In many conflicts they are cheap and docile "cannon fodder" and all this for a miserable salary. More and more governments, mainly dictatorial ones, reinforce their armies in this way. According to the United Nations this number is very inadequate and so far very little attention has been given to this scandal. The United Nations has asked all governments to put a stop this practice, which is against human rights, immediately.

USA (lwi)

A US national youth gathering in 1991 has been approved as part of the overall program for youth ministry in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). In addition to a churchwide gathering every three years, ELCA youth ministry plans call for regional and synodical gatherings as well as youth ministry programs and resources for congregations. "We believe that this will put the ELCA in a unique position both in terms of being able to serve the youth ministry needs of the congregations and at the same time supporting and encouraging that ministry through synodical, regional and churchwide youth gathering," said the Rev. Eldon DeWeerth, executive director of the ELCA Division for Congregational Life. He added that no other denomination has been able to provide the types of gatherings the ELCA has provided.

VATICAN (kipa)

Rome, August 12 -- The section "Youth" of the Popal Council for Laypeople in Rome has started a large-scale survey on the situation of pastoral care for youth in all Bishops' Conferences all over the world. Today, youth occupy a position of priority in the life of the churches. The survey intends to provide individual churches and the Vatican with a summary of the worldwide situation of pastoral care for youth in the Catholic Church. The questionnaire on pastoral care for youth should be completed worldwide by the end of the year by the Bishops' Conferences and by the bishops who are responsible for this section and sent to Rome for evaluation.



We have the following material which you can receive free of charge upon request from our desk: (mostly meant to be resource material for youth leaders but can also be edifying for anybody committed to youth work)

- Guides for the planning of youth work (produced by the American Lutheran Church-ALC) for 1986/87 and 1987/88;
- A report on the Asian Lutheran Youth Gathering, held in Jerusalem on August 2-16, 1987 (produced by the LWF Youth Desk);
- A report on the African Lutheran Youth Leaders Conference in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe on May 10-21, 1988 (produced by the LWF Youth Desk);
- A report on the European Lutheran Youth Conference in Bratislava, CSSR, on September 30 - October 11, 1988.

*CHRISTMAS IS COMING AGAIN:
LET'S REJOICE!*

- *May the fact that God has become one of us in Jesus be understood this year by many more people*
- *May the awareness of God's love create a feeling of joy in each one of us*
- *May God's love motivate love to the needy and*
- *May our love to the needy not be selective according to our own personal desire, but according to the degree of our neighbor's need*
- *In that way this year's Christmas will not only profit shopping centers, but also God's Kingdom*

These are our cordial Christmas wishes to you, dear reader.

YOURS,

Brigitta Jilina

